

Documents on Diplomacy: Exercises

Paper Bullets: International Agreements

1

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS (1920)

The League of Nations was an international organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, created after the First World War to provide a

forum for resolving international disputes. It was first proposed by President Woodrow Wilson as part of his Fourteen Points plan for an equitable peace in Europe, but the United States was never a member.

The idea of the League was grounded in the broad, international revulsion against the unprecedented destruction of the First World War and

the contemporary understanding of its origins. This was reflected in all of Wilson's Fourteen Points, which were themselves based on theories of collective security and international organization debated amongst academics, jurists, socialists and utopians before and during the war.

<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/League>

2

FOUR POWER TREATY (1921—1922)

Between 1921 and 1922, the world's largest naval powers gathered at the Washington Naval Conference to discuss naval disarmament and ways to relieve growing tensions in East Asia.

In the wake of World War I, leaders in the international community sought to prevent the possibility of another war. Rising Japanese militarism and an international arms race heightened these concerns and policymakers worked to reduce the threat.

In the Four-Power Treaty, the United States, France, Britain, and Japan agreed to consult with each other in the event of a future crisis in East Asia before taking action. This treaty replaced the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902, which had been a source of some concern for the United States. In the years following World War I, U.S. policymakers saw Japan as the greatest rising military threat.

Heavily militarized and looking to expand its influence and territory, Japan had the potential to threaten U.S. colonial possessions in Asia and the profitable China trade. Because of the 1902 agreement between Britain and Japan, however, if the United States and Japan entered into a conflict, Britain might be obligated to join Japan against the United States. By ending that treaty and creating a Four-Power agreement, the countries involved ensured that none would be obligated to engage in a conflict, but a mechanism would exist for discussions if one emerged.

<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/NavalConference>

3

NINE POWER TREATY (1921—1922)

The final multilateral agreement made at the Washington Naval Conference was the Nine-Power Treaty, which marked the internationalization of the U.S. Open Door Policy in China. The treaty promised that each of the signatories—

the United States, Britain, Japan, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and China—would respect the territorial integrity of China. The treaty recognized Japanese dominance in Manchuria but otherwise affirmed the importance of equal opportunity for all nations doing business in the country; for its part, China promised not to discriminate against any country seeking to do business

there. Like the Four-Power Treaty, the treaty on China called for consultations in the event of a violation instead of tying the signatories to a particular response. As a result, it lacked a method of enforcement to ensure that all powers abided by its terms.

<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/NavalConference>

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4

KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT (1928)

The Kellogg-Briand Pact was an agreement to outlaw war signed on August 27, 1928. Sometimes called the Pact of Paris for the city in which it

was signed, the pact was one of many international efforts to prevent another World War, but it had little effect in stopping the rising militarism of the 1930s or preventing World War II.

On August 27, 1928, 15 nations signed the pact at Paris. Signatories included France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy and Japan.

Later, an additional forty-seven nations followed suit, so the pact was eventually signed by most of the established nations in the world. The U.S. Senate ratified the agreement by a vote of 85-1, though it did so only after making reservations to note that U.S. participation did not limit its right to self-defense or require it to act against signatories breaking the agreement.

<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/Kellogg>

5

LYTTON REPORT

While the United States sought its own solution, it also sent an unofficial delegate along with the League of Nations group investigating the incident.

The resulting report, written by the Lytton Commission, divided blame for the conflict in Manchuria equally between Chinese nationalism and Japanese militarism. Still, the report stated that it would not recognize the new state of Manchukuo on the grounds that its establishment violated the territorial integrity of China, and therefore the Nine-Power Treaty to which many of the prominent

League members subscribed. When the Lytton Report was ratified by the League in 1933, the Japanese delegation walked out and never returned to the League Council. The Chinese and Japanese signed a truce, but that agreement left the Japanese firmly in control of Manchuria

http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/Mukden_incident